

“B” Rated Weeds

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant,
but may have limited distribution in some counties

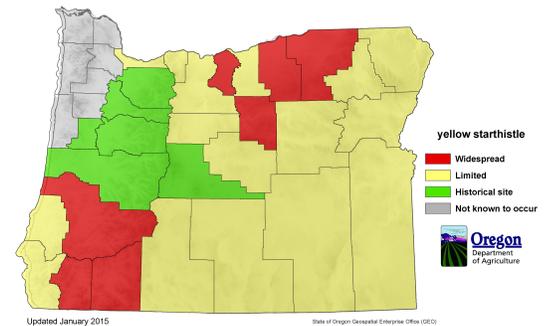
Yellow starthistle
Centaurea solstitialis

Other common names: golden starthistle, St. Barnaby's thistle, yellow cockspur

USDA symbol: YEST
ODA rating: B



Introduction: Yellow starthistle, *Centaurea solstitialis*, is native to Eurasia and was introduced to California around 1850 via South America. It is now common throughout the west in open areas, roadsides, rangeland, wildlands, hay fields, pastures, and waste areas. Recent reports indicate that yellow starthistle infests between 10 and 15 million acres in California (courtesy UC IPM Online). Tens of thousands of acres are present in southwestern Oregon. Disturbances created by cultivation, poorly timed mowing, road building and maintenance, or overgrazing favor this rapid colonizer. It forms dense infestations and rapidly depletes soil moisture, thus preventing the establishment of other species.



Distribution: Douglas, Jackson and Josephine Counties have significant acreages of YST. Other areas include Grant, Wheeler and Union counties.

Description: Yellow starthistle is a gray-green to blue-green plant with a deep, vigorous taproot. It produces bright, thistle like yellow flowers with sharp spines surrounding the base. Yellow starthistle grows to heights varying from 6 inches to 5 feet. The stems of mature plants are rigid, spreading, and typically branching from the base in open areas. Stems and leaves are covered with a loose, cottony wool that gives them a whitish appearance. Stems appear winged due to leaf bases that extend beyond the nodes. Basal leaves are 2 to 3 inches long and deeply lobed. Upper leaves are short (0.5 to 1 inch long) and narrow with few lobes. (courtesy UC IPM Online)

Impacts: The economic losses in grazing areas can be huge. Yellow starthistle can completely displace desirable forage species in warm, semiarid environments. Opportunities for bird hunting have been impacted in Idaho due to the thick stands of starthistle. Significant resources are directed towards yellow starthistle each year to contain infestations.

Biological controls: Multiple biological control agents are established in Oregon. Two seed weevils, a seed fly, and a rust have provided significant control in some regions, reducing the need for chemical control programs.

